

IMAGES ON FINGER RINGS AND EARLY CHRISTIAN ART

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Clement of Alexandria probably wrote the *Teacher* (Παιδαγωγὸς Λόγος) sometime between A.D. 185/190 and 210/215. Efforts to situate the treatise in a more limited time frame, such as A.D. 202/203 to 211/212, depend on a series of suppositions that may or may not be correct.¹ About two-thirds of the way through Book III Clement

gives his well-known prescriptions for the wearing and use of finger rings and for the choice of images to be emblazoned on such rings. The passage is important for the art historian, first, because it gives an early glimpse at a largely neglected category of Early Christian art and, second, because it hints at one of the ways by which Early Christian art first may have come into the world.² In other words, the passage speaks (albeit obliquely) to the perennial question of the origin(s) and beginning of Early Christian art. Ernst Kitzinger, whom we honor in these essays, has encouraged us to look closely not only at the monuments but also at the documentary side of art history, and it is with this

¹The dating of *Paed.* depends on internal and external criteria. As for the former, Eusebius (*HE* 6.2.2) dates the beginning of the Severan persecution to the tenth year of the emperor's reign, either August 201 to August 202 or April 202 to 203. Eusebius (*HE* 5.10.1 f) puts Pantaenus under Commodus (sole ruler A.D. 180–192), and he says (*HE* 6.6.1) that Clement followed Pantaenus as the head of the catechetical school at Alexandria. In the *Chronographies* Julius Africanus says that Clement became known in Alexandria during the reign of Commodus (Ἀφρικανὸς δὲ φησὶν ὁ χρονογράφος, ὅτι περὶ τοῦτον [sc. tempore Commodi Imp.] κλήμης ὁ στρωματεὺς ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ ἐγνωρίζετο: M. Routh, recens., *Reliquiae Sacrae*, II [Oxford, 1814], 52), but he does not say how he became known, whether as Pantaenus' successor (i.e., before A.D. 192) or through the publication of one or more of his writings, or both. We must presume that Clement left Alexandria at the outbreak of the persecution; to have remained would have been certain death. Eusebius says (*HE* 6.11.6) that Clement delivered a letter written by Alexander of Cappadocian Caesarea to the church in Antioch while Alexander was still in jail, i.e., between A.D. 202/203 and 211/212. Thus if Clement wrote *Paed.* while he was still in Alexandria (a theory which in view of the contents of this treatise makes sense), the treatise must be given a terminus ad quem of A.D. 201/203. If he wrote it elsewhere, then this latter date becomes a terminus a quo. As for the internal evidence, C. Heussi, "Die Stromateis des Clemens Alexandrinus und ihr Verhältnis zum Protrepikos und Pädagogos," *ZWT* 45 (1902), 465–512, was convinced that the sequence in which Clement composed his writings was as follows: *Strom.* I–IV, *Paed.*, *Strom.* V–VII. Heussi based this reconstruction on a conjecture offered by P. Wendland, *ThLz* (1898), 653. The essence of the argument is that *Paed.* seems to refer to *Strom.* II–IV as if the latter had already been written down, but the details of proof are complex and beyond the limitations of this short article. It must suffice to say that A. von Harnack, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur bis Eusebius*, II.2 (Leipzig, 1958; rpr. of the 1904 ed.), 3 f, was convinced by the Wendland/Heussi thesis, and O. Bardenheuer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen Literatur*, II (Darmstadt, 1962; rpr. of the 1914 ed.), 55 f, was not. Th. Klauser, *JbAC* 1 (1958), 21, misleads the reader by giving the impression that the matter is decided in favor of the Wendland/Heussi thesis: it is not.

²As suggested by Th. Klauser, "Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der christlichen Kunst, IV," *JbAC* 4 (1961), 139: "... die Ringgemmen. Sie scheinen uns in der Tat die ursprüngliche Heimat der frühen biblischen Kompositionen der altchristlichen Sepulchralkunst gewesen zu sein." Klauser could have expressed the matter a bit more circumspectly: "eine von verschiedenen Heimaten": Early Christian art does not derive from one source only, but from several, depending on the workshop context. Nevertheless, Klauser's hypothesis needs to be taken seriously. There is reason to believe that *gemmarum scalptores* (Pliny, *NH* 37.63: *scalpentes gemmas*) played a role in formulating some of the earliest iconographic clichés employed by early Christians. More work needs to be done in this area. Rather than always looking to intellectual and spiritual causes that purport to explain the origins of Christian iconography (as, for example, V. Weidlé, *The Baptism of Art* [London, 1950] and Max Dvořák in *Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte* [Munich, 1928], 3–40), one should attempt to locate this tradition in its proper artisanal contexts. J. Engemann, "Glyptik," *RAC* 11 (Stuttgart, 1981), 281, dismisses Klauser's sphragistic hypothesis: "Ein Herstellungsbeginn von Gemmen mit biblischen Szenen von entsprechenden Bildern der christlichen Malerei ist weder zu erweisen noch wahrscheinlich." Since Early Christian gems have never been properly dated (and perhaps never will be), Engemann may or may not be correct on the first point. *Wahrscheinlichkeit* is another issue, and on this point he has struck the wrong note altogether: the use of gemstones was a common culture trait in the Mediterranean world of the first three centuries A.D., and it is to be presumed (until proved otherwise) that Christians participated in the trait. Furthermore, on the evidence of *Paed.*, it is reasonable to suppose that at least some Christians exercised a degree of discretion in the choice of images emblazoned on their rings.

in mind that I offer these brief observations on Clement.

The passage in question, *Paedagogus* 3.57.1–3.60.1, has become something of a *crux interpretum*.³ Essentially there are two issues at stake here. First and most important, what does Clement actually say in this passage? And second, what inferences might reasonably be drawn from Clement's own words? It is my purpose to address the first of these two issues in some detail, but a full discussion of the second is beyond the limits of this essay. For the text of the *Paedagogus*, the reader is referred to Otto Stählin's edition.⁴

As he does throughout this treatise, Clement purports to represent the words of Jesus here. Whether or not he does is irrelevant to our purposes. The important point is that, in the name of Jesus, Clement sets forth a series of reasoned principles which govern the Christian use of finger rings. These principles may be paraphrased under the following rubrics.

1. *Paed.* 3.57.1, lines 31, 32: Jesus has granted women (αὐταῖς)⁵ the right to wear a gold ring. *Nota bene*: Clement does not specify the form of the ring, whether a simple hoop (presumably marked with an incuse[?] image), or a bezel similarly marked and mounted on a hoop, or a stone intaglio (or cameo) secured in a bezel mounted on a hoop. All three forms survive both in the corpus of second/third-century Roman rings⁶ and in the

corpus of Early Christian rings⁷ (the latter presumed to have a terminus a quo of approximately A.D. 300).

2. *Paed.* 3.57.1, lines 32, 33: Jesus allows women to wear the gold ring only in discharging their domestic duties which include, most importantly, the care and protection of household goods (evidently movable or personal properties)—valuables of this sort must be marked with the owner's seal.⁸ In most Roman and Greco-Roman contexts this would mean the husband's *sphragis* or *glyphē*, of which the wife would be granted a duplicate.⁹ Occasionally a wealthy and socially prominent Roman woman controlled her own assets, and naturally one important mark of her social and financial independence would be her seal.

3. *Paed.* 3.58.2, line 24: Jesus also gave men the right to wear the gold ring.

4. *Paed.* 3.58.2, lines 21, 22, 23: Jesus allows men to wear the finger ring only in contexts where they have civic business that they must attend to or where they have business obligations in the country (presumably the care of real properties). In both cases the ring may be worn only for the purpose of sealing. In other words, among his male addressees Clement imagines men who play some role in local government and who own agricultural lands—they will use the signet ring to attest documents.

5. *Paed.* 3.57.1, line 32 (οὐδὲ τοῦτον εἰς κόσμον) and 3.58.2, lines 25, 26: Jesus did not grant women or men the right to wear rings for cosmetic (aesthetic) reasons. On the authority of the Wisdom of Sirach 21:21 (ὥς κόσμος χρυσοῦς φρονίμῳ παιδεῖα). Clement reminds his reader that the only gold ornament (in the sense of jewelry) that is appropriate to the wise (Christian) man is *paideia*.

6. *Paed.* 3.57.2–3.58.1, lines 3–19: Clement imagines a situation in which the letter of the law (against wearing rings for any reason other than

³Recent literature: Th. Klauser, "Studien zur Entstehungsgeschichte der christlichen Kunst, I," *JbAC* 1 (1958), 21–23; L. Eizenhöfer, "Die Siegelbildvorschläge des Clemens von Alexandrien und die älteste christliche Literatur," *JbAC* 3 (1960), 51–69; "Zum Satz des Clemens von Alexandrien über das Siegelbild des Fischers. Echo aus dem Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum," *JbAC* 6 (1963), 173 f; H. D. Altendorf, "Die Siegelbildvorschläge des Clemens von Alexandrien," *ZNW* 58 (1967), 129–38; P. Maser, "Die Siegelbildvorschläge des Clemens von Alexandrien und das spätantike rabbinische Judentum," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg. Gesellschafts- und sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe* 22 (1973), 65–70.

⁴O. Stählin and U. Treu, *Clemens Alexandrinus I. Protrepticus. Paedagogus* (Berlin, 1972) = GCS 12.

⁵These are the same female addressees whom Clement (speaking in the name of the Teacher—Logos) had just admonished (*Paed.* 3.56.3–5) not to pierce their ears (κωλύει δὲ βιαζομένους τὴν φύσιν ὁ λόγος τοὺς λοβοὺς τῶν ὠτίων τιτράναι) and not to wear gold earrings, a practice he compares on the authority of Prov. 11:22 (ὥσπερ ἐνώπιον ἐν ὄνι ὕδς, οὕτως γυναικὶ κακόφρονι κάλλος) to putting a gold ring in a pig's snout.

⁶The literature is voluminous. For Roman intaglios and cameos see M. Henig, *A Corpus of Roman Engraved Gemstones from British Sites* (Oxford, 1974), with extensive bibliography. Gold hoops marked, for example, with an incuse palm branch: Tony Hackens, *Catalogue of the Classical Collection. Classical Jewelry. Mu-*

seum of Art, RISD (Providence, R.I., 1976), no. 68; F. Henkel, *Die römischen Fingerringe der Rheinlande und der benachbarten Gebiete* (Berlin, 1913), III. 45, 45a, 45b, 46, 46a; IV. 71.

⁷The most comprehensive listing of finger rings exhibiting biblical subjects: H. Leclercq, "Gemmes," *DACL* 6.1, 794–864. For more recent bibliography: Engemann, "Glyptik" (above, note 2).

⁸One should not think that householders sealed only precious and costly household objects: the range of domestic objects that were marked with seals to protect them against theft was quite broad. Thus in the *Philogelos* the Simpleton seals a jug of Italian wine, and his servant bores a hole in the bottom of the jug so as not to disturb the seal; *Philogelos: Hierocles et Philagrii facetiae*, ed. A. Eberhard (Berlin, 1869), no. 263.

⁹At *Paed.* 3.58.1, lines 19, 20, 21 Clement approves the practice of men leaving their wives in charge of housekeeping.

sealing) might give way to the pressures of the moment. The case he conceives involves the woman who has a philandering husband, the woman who has not been lucky enough to contract a chaste marriage (ὁ γάμος σώφρων), and as a way of pleasing the errant spouse bedecks herself with jewelry: is she permitted to do this? After initially admitting the concession to ladies who are unfortunate in this way (*Paed.* 3.57.2, lines 3–7), Clement says no; even in this case the wearing of jewelry for aesthetic reasons is forbidden. Ladies must call upon other charms, notably their moral virtues, in order to win over their husbands.

7. *Paed.* 3.59.1, line 3: men may not wear the ring in the feminine manner on the joint of the finger, but instead they are to wear it at the root of the small finger. That way the ring will not fall off, and the hand will remain unencumbered, hence free for the performance of work. In view of Clement's addressees, who are evidently Christian gentlemen and not *banausoi*,¹⁰ *Paed.* 3.59.1, line 5 (ἔσται γὰρ οὕτως εὐεργῆς ἢ χεῖρ) is a curious entry.

To summarize the section that extends from *Paed.* 3.57.1 to 3.59.1, it should be said that Clement's views here are entirely consistent with the tone and content of the rest of the treatise. The *Teacher* is a protracted piece of deliberative rhetoric¹¹—it is as much a protreptic discourse as is Clement's *Logos protreptikos*. The difference is that in the latter he is addressing his exhortations to non-Christians, whereas the exhortations in the former treatise are directed to the converted. Clement's overall judgment¹² on the wearing of

jewelry is negative, but he regards the wearing of gold finger rings marked with images as a regrettable necessity brought about by bad childhood training which produces an inclination to dishonesty. In order to defend their property against theft, owners need seals and hence rings, but if people were properly brought up to respect honesty, there would be no need for seals and thus no need for rings (*Paed.* 3.57.1, lines 33, 1–3). Rings may be used to seal objects, but otherwise they are valueless, and most especially in Clement's view they have none of what we today would call an aesthetic value—what he calls their ornamental or cosmetic property. The only aesthetic that Clement's Jesus will admit is an aesthetic of morality, which is strictly speaking no aesthetic at all. In other words, Clement subsumes beauty (or buries it) under the rubric of ethics. Physical beauty (and hence all art) is a lie perpetrated on an unsuspecting world by men who lack all intellectual and moral integrity.¹³ Clement sounds like Tertullian in *De idololatria*:¹⁴ the world would be a better place if all artists and art were suppressed.

Although I cannot pursue this subject here,¹⁵ it should be noted that what Clement had to say

¹⁰*Banausoi*: B. Schweitzer, "Der bildende Künstler und der Begriff des Künstlerischen in der Antike," *Neue heidelberger Jahrbücher* 2 (1925), 28–132. Christian attitudes toward labor and laborers: F. M. de Robertis, *Lavoro e lavoratori nel mondo romano* (Bari, 1963); de Robertis tends to treat patristic sources uncritically; see further critical remarks by D. Nörr, *ZSav* 82 (1965), 67–105.

¹¹P. Volkmann, *Die Rhetorik der Griechen und Römer* (Leipzig, 1885), 294–314 ("Die beratende Beredsamkeit" or *genus deliberativum*); W. Kroll, *RE*, Suppl. 7 (Stuttgart, 1940), 1039–1138. Protreptic: I. Düring, *Der Protreptikos des Aristoteles* (Frankfurt, 1969); *Aristoteles. Darstellung und Interpretation seines Denkens* (Heidelberg, 1966), 400–433 (Düring calls the *Prot.* "eine Lobrede auf das Geistesleben" and "eine Mahnrede an Themison"; it is both of these). For the immediate literary background of Clement: D. Turkowska, *L'Hortensius de Cicéron et le Protreptique d'Aristote* (Warsaw, 1965). A large part of Clement's deliberative intention in the *Paed.* is to persuade his readers to take up a moral life consistent with what he perceives to be Christian ethical principles.

¹²Clement on the wearing of jewelry: *Paed.* 2.118.1–129.4; 3.4.1 f; 3.56.3–60.1. *Paed.* 2.121.2, 3: only the good is beautiful; *Paed.* 2.122.1: love of ornament should be rejected; *Paed.*

2.122.2–124.2: wearing gold chains and necklaces is a kind of unholy slavery (with proof texts from Philemon, Nicostratus, and Aristophanes)—this is in contrast to the holy kind of slavery: the holy man bedecks himself with necklaces of modesty and *sophrosyne*, *Paed.* 2.129.1. *Paed.* 2.125.3: Apelles, the *zoographos*, remonstrates with a pupil—he cannot paint his model's true beauty (understood here as her natural beauty), so he compensates for incompetence by covering her with gold. *Paed.* 2.126.1: women must bedeck themselves not with gold but with the word of Christ (repeated variously). *Paed.* 2.127.3: true physical beauty is given by nature; art (*technē*) should not fight against nature (*physis*); those who are born ugly and who try to compensate for their natural state are put to shame by the things (such as jewelry) that they use to cover up what they do not have, namely, natural beauty. *Paed.* 2.129.3: it is *para physin* to pierce the ear lobes and attach earrings to them (repeated at *Paed.* 3.56.3, where the piercing of the lobe is equated with doing violence to nature [βιαζομένους τὴν φύσιν]).

¹³Overall, Clement's judgment on art is derived (ultimately, but probably not directly) from Plato's *Republic* 509D–511E: art belongs to the realm of *eikasia*.

¹⁴*Idol.* 1.1: idolatry is the chief crime of mankind; *Idol.* 3.2: the devil brought into the world the makers of statues and portraits and every kind of representation; *Idol.* 7.1–8.5: the makers of idols (i.e., those who practice idolatrous *technē*) should be suppressed, and in any case they should not be allowed to take up residence in the ideal community, namely, the church. For *Idol.* 1.1–IX.9, cf. P. G. van der Nat, *Q.S.F. Tertulliani De Idololatria. Part I*, Proefschrift (Leiden, 1965).

¹⁵In judging the evidentiary value of ancient (including Early Christian) written statements about the visual arts, literary context is a primary consideration. There are numerous examples that one could adduce to prove the point, but clearly the model is Plato; cf. E. C. Keuls, *Plato and Greek Painting* (Leiden, 1978) and reviews by J. J. Pollitt, *AJA* 84 (1980), 106–8 and A. Stewart, *ArtB* 62 (1980), 648–50.

about beauty and art in general, and jewelry and finger rings in particular, must be understood in the light of several factors: his historical setting, the literary genres that he chose, his audience, and the goals that he set for himself both in literature and in real life. These factors complicate the interpretation of Clement's words, and to a considerable extent they make it difficult or impossible for us to take Clement's words at face value. The same is true, incidentally, for Tertullian. Clement's negative views on beauty and art, and in the immediate context on jewelry and finger rings, probably had little real impact on his contemporaries. In fact, one may question if his extreme position on finger rings (namely, that they should be worn only for sealing) was intended literally or rhetorically, that is, in order to make a point. In any event, as far as the history of art is concerned, Clement's restrictive views on finger rings had little real effect on the jewelry market. Severan *gemmarum scalptores*,¹⁶ *aurifices*,¹⁷ and *fabri argentarii*¹⁸ continued to turn out their intaglios and their gold and silver bezels and hoops. At both Alexandria and Rome people of all stripes, including Christians, wore finger rings—and surely their motives for doing so were not always utilitarian. One wonders in fact how closely Clement himself adhered to the letter of his own prescriptions.

At *Paed.* 3.59.1, line 7, Clement turns to the question of images on finger rings, the subject that is of direct concern to historians of art. Just as earlier he did not specify the form of the rings that he had in mind, so also here he does not denominate the form of the image, whether convex (cameo) or concave (intaglio).¹⁹ In describing the emblem of Seleucus I (Nikator) it might be argued that he envisaged an intaglio (thus ἐνεχαράττετο²⁰ τῇ γλυφῇ

at *Paed.* 3.59.2, line 9), but even this is uncertain. Furthermore, there is no indication that he took Seleucus' *glyphē* as the standard type for the entire class of images that he enumerates to the end of the passage.

Clement mentions five images (or on an alternate reading, six) that are acceptable for Christians to wear on their rings: (1) a dove (*Paed.* 3.59.2, line 8: πελειάς); (2) a fish (ibid.: ἰχθύς); (3) a ship running in a fair wind (ibid.: ναῦς οὐριοδρομοῦσα); (4) a lyre, such as the one used by Polycrates²¹ of Samos (ibid.: λύρα μουσική ἣ κέχρηται Πολυκράτης); and (5) a ship's anchor, such as the one Seleucus I (Nikator) had engraved as his emblem (ibid., line 9: ἄγκυρα ναυτική, ἣν Σέλευκος ἐνεχαράττετο τῇ γλυφῇ).

Theodor Klauser²² has suggested that Clement had in mind still another image, a sixth, namely, that of a fisherman; but this possibility hinges on the interpretation of a relatively intractable *crux*, namely, *Paed.* 3.59.2, lines 10, 11: καὶ ἂν ἀλιεύων τις ᾗ, ἀποστόλου μεμνήσεται καὶ τῶν ἐξ ὕδατος ἀνασπόμενων παιδίων “. . . and if someone is fishing (or is a fisherman), he will call to mind the apostle (Peter)²³ and the children (Christian baptizands) drawn up out of the water.”²⁴ If I understand the issues at stake here, there are two ways to make sense of this sentence.

First, one reading would have Clement intending to connect the protasis of this sentence (beginning καὶ, or καὶ ἔαν) with one or more of the five previously mentioned images. Syntactically the most likely antecedent would be the anchor, but on the criterion of content the more probable ante-

¹⁶ *Scalptores gemmarum*: Pliny, *NH* 37.63; a *scalptor* of gems: *CIL* 6.33908, 33909; *gemmarius*: Cicero, *Verr.* 4.39; *CIL* 6.245, 9433–35; *CIL* 9.4795; *NS* 9 (1912), 69, no. 14; *caelatura gemmarum*: Exod. 28:11 (Vulg.); *ars gemmaria*: Exod. 39:6 (Vulg.); *gemmarius sculptor*: *CIL* 6.9436.

¹⁷ *Aurifex*: for numerous attestations cf. H. von Petrikovits, “Die Spezialisierung des römischen Handwerks,” *Das Handwerk in vor- und frühgeschichtlicher Zeit, I*, ed. H. Jankuhn et al. (Göttingen, 1981), s.v., and ibid., II, *ZPE* 43 (1981), s.v.

¹⁸ *Faber argentarius* (ἀργυροκόπος) and cognates: cf. H. von Petrikovits, opp. cit., s. *argentarius* (with further bibliography).

¹⁹ On the intriguing Tannaitic distinction between sealing with a convex or a concave intaglio, cf. Maser, “Siegelbildvorschläge” (above, note 3) and E. E. Urbach, “The Rabbinical Laws of Idolatry in the Second and Third Centuries in the Light of Archaeological and Historical Facts,” *IEJ* 9 (1959), 235 note 81.

²⁰ Plutarch, *Mor.* 985B. *Gryllus* (ed. Bernardakis [Leipzig, 1895]): ὅθεν ἐποίησας γλυφὴν τῇ σφραγίδι καὶ τῆς ἀσπίδος κόσμον ὁ πατήρ (Odysseus), ἀμειβόμενος τὸ ζῶον. Iamblichus,

Prot. 21 (ed. Pistelli [Leipzig, 1888]): θεοῦ τύπον μὴ ἐπύγλυφε δακτυλίῳ. Theophilus, *Institutes* I.337 (ed. E. C. Ferrini, *Institutum graeca paraphrasis Theophilo antecessori vulgo tributum* . . . I [Berlin, 1884], 157): μᾶς δὲ γλυφῆς ἦσαν οἱ ἐπτὰ, τουτέστιν ἓνα καὶ τὸν αὐτὸν εἶχον χαρακτῆρα;

²¹ C. Seltman, “The Ring of Polycrates,” *Centennial Publication of the American Numismatic Society*, ed. H. Ingholt (New York, 1958), 595–601. The lyre (*cheleis*) was a popular subject on Hellenistic and Greco-Roman intaglios. There are numerous entries in *AGDS*; cf. A. Furtwangler, *Beschreibung der geschnittenen Steine im Antiquarium, Königliche Museen zu Berlin* (Berlin, 1896), nos. 6079–83; *Indiana University Art Museum Publication 1969/1. Ancient Gems from the Collection of Burton Y. Berry* (Bloomington, 1969), no. 196.

²² Th. Klauser, *JbAC* 1 (1958), 23.

²³ Peter the fisher of men: Luke 5:10par.; Clement, *Paed.* 3.52.2; Tertullian, *Marc.* 4.9; Origen, *In Lev.* Hom. 7.7; cf. F. J. Dölger, *IXΘΥC* 5 (Münster, 1943–59), 314–20.

²⁴ Baptism as a catch of fish: Clement, *Paed.* 3.101.3, lines 26–28 (the Hymn to Christ the Teacher); Tertullian, *Bap.* I.3: “Sed nos pisciculi secundum nostrum Iesum Christum in aqua nascimur”; cf. J. Engemann, “Fisch,” *RAC* 7 (Stuttgart, 1969), 1025 (Engemann questions the traditional association of this passage with baptism).

cedent is the fish. If it is Clement's intention to connect the concessive clause in the protasis with an antecedent, then any one of the maritime subjects could fill the bill, but the fish is the most likely candidate. It might well be his intention to say that a person who is fishing and wearing a signet emblazoned with a fish image will call to mind Peter, the fisher of souls, and baptism as a catch of fish, but if that is his intention, why did he not insert the clause after the fish? In its present place, the καὶ ἐξῆν seems to refer back to its immediate antecedent, the anchor, but judged by the criterion of meaning, this interpretation is less compelling (although feasible). In one place, Klauser²⁵ (following Stählin) translates the sentence: "Oder wenn einer ein Fischer ist (und sich—so wird etwa zu ergänzen sein—deswegen einen Fisch als Siegelbild wählt), wird er an den Apostel denken und an die aus dem Taufwasser hervorgezogenen Kinder." To my mind this is the most likely construal of the passage.

The second possibility is that the καὶ ἐξῆν clause introduces a new idea and refers by implication to yet another image, one that had not been mentioned hitherto, namely, the image of a fisherman. Klauser has suggested the following interpretation: "Und wenn einer ein Fischer ist (und sich deswegen einen Fischer als Siegelbild wählt). . . ."²⁶ But if this is the correct interpretation, it is curious that Clement omits ἡ ἀλιεύς after τῇ γλυφῇ. If the protasis beginning καὶ ἐξῆν may be presumed to have an antecedent, and if that antecedent is thought to be "fisherman," then it is difficult to understand why our author would not have made his intention clearer. If he really envisaged six acceptable images, surely he would have identified all six explicitly. In fact Clement's silence on this putative sixth image weighs against the presumption that he intended such an image in the first place.

Both Leo Eizenhöfer²⁷ and Hans-Dietrich Altendorf²⁸ have proposed other interpretations, but the first is unacceptable on grammatical grounds and the second because it misconstrues the context of this passage. In fact there are two probabilities: either Clement intended the concessive clause beginning καὶ ἐξῆν to refer back to one or more antecedents, or he intended that this passage should introduce a sixth image. Either way, as far as the history

of art is concerned, the result is the same: Clement associates a visual image here with a Christian meaning and thereby creates the necessary precondition for a Christian form of art. It is true that he is not very clear about the specific image that he has in mind. He does not create an explicit equation on the order of ἡ σφραγὶς τοῦ ἀλιέως = Πέτρος. On the other hand, his general intention, as far as image and meaning are concerned, seems reasonably clear.

The contrary argument,²⁹ to wit, that Clement could not have intended to associate image and Christian meaning because he was a principled iconophobe and opponent of all forms of visual imagery, imports a meaning from the outside, namely, from his protracted attack on Greek art which he sets forth primarily in the *Protreptikos*. But that is not the worst of it. This argument also misconstrues the point of Clement's relentless assault on Hellenic art, as if it has anything to do with the Christian use of images in Christian settings. It does not. One can wish that Clement had been clearer in naming the specific image he envisaged and its relationship to Peter, the soteriological type, and to the catch of fish, the baptismal type, but the general intention here is unmistakable.

And finally, at the end of the section concerning images on finger rings, Clement identifies five subjects that are forbidden to Christians: (1) portraits of the gods (lit., "faces of idols," *Paed.* 3.59.2, line 11: εἰδώλων πρόσωπα); (2) sword (ibid., line 12: ξίφος); (3) bow (ibid.: τόξον); (4) drinking cups (*Paed.* 3.60.1, line 13: κύπελα); and (5) lovers and hetairai (ibid., line 14: τοὺς ἐρωμένους ἢ τὰς ἐταίρας). In contrast to the section above where he recommends certain images, here where he proscribes subjects he is much clearer about the perceived relationship between specific images and their symbolic associations. Christians pursue peace; the sword and the bow contradict that value. Christians are people of temperance and moderation (τοῖς σωφρονοῦσιν); drinking cups suggest a different approach to life. Christians are not like the licentious men who have images of their male lovers and of their favorite prostitutes engraved on their rings. And of course (*Paed.* 3.59.2, line 11), Christians can have nothing to do with idolatry.

It seems likely (although there is no proof) that the ten (or eleven) images that Clement mentions here are intended in a typical or illustrative sense:

²⁵ Th. Klauser, *JbAC* 1 (1958), 22.

²⁶ Ibid., 23.

²⁷ Eizenhöfer, "Siegelbildvorschläge" (above, note 3).

²⁸ Altendorf, "Siegelbildvorschläge" (above, note 3).

²⁹ Ibid., 134–38.

they represent the kinds of images that Christians should or should not employ on their rings. If this is correct, then what is important pedagogically is that the pupil should extract from the Teacher's directives a principle of selection and make it his (or her) own. As for the forbidden images, Clement makes that principle of selection perfectly clear: images of behaviors incompatible with Christian morality are off limits. And on the positive side, we must presume his intention is to allow images that can be harmonized with Christian meanings.

In the study of Early Christian art, finger rings may be classified on iconographic grounds under one of two rubrics: (1) rings³⁰ exhibiting biblical subjects—the examples are numerous; and (2) rings exhibiting Greco-Roman and Greco-Egyptian mythological subjects that have been Christianized—the best-known single example is the gold *Orpheus christianus* ring in the British Museum,³¹ but there are others. Clement's importance for the study of iconography on finger rings (and in other contexts as well) is that he provides yet a third rubric, namely, the category of generic (or neutral or cognate) images that were Christianized. The subjects that fall under this third category include animals (such as fishes and doves), flora (such as palm branches), objects from daily life (such as anchors), and genre scenes (such as

shepherds). By and large, subjects that fall under this third category constitute a neglected area of study³²—the area is certainly neglected if one limits the generalization to the minor arts and in particular to finger rings. The reasons for this neglect are obvious: for the most part their evidentiary value for the history and development of Early Christian iconography is negligible. This is the view expressed, for example, in Martin Henig's splendid study³³ of the intaglios from Roman Britain, and it is also the view implied by Josef Engemann in his article³⁴ on Early Christian gem engraving. Engemann takes a minimalist view of generic subjects on gemstones—this is a safe position and one that is currently very much in favor among German scholars. But it is also a view that fails to advance our understanding of generic images that were submitted to *interpretatio christiana* during the early history of the church. The infusion of generic images with Christian meanings goes a long way toward explaining the origins of Early Christian art, and thus in my view it is a mistake to dismiss the putative importance of generic images on second- and third-century intaglios.

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³⁰ See note 7 above.

³¹ O. M. Dalton, *Catalogue of Early Christian Antiquities . . . in the British Museum* (London, 1901), no. 123.

³² Fishes on gemstones: Dölger, *IXΘYC* 5, passim; shepherds on gemstones: A. Provoost, *Iconologisch onderzoek van de laat-antieke herdersvoor-stellingen*, Proefschrift (Louvain, 1976), nos. 801–911.

³³ Henig, *Corpus* (above, note 6), 120.

³⁴ Engemann, "Glyptik" (above, note 2), 278–80.